

# Blue Streak Sportsmanship & Expectations

Bruce Brown, CMAA  
Athletic Director  
Lake High School

## ***“What is acceptable and appropriate behavior for a fan at a Lake High School athletic contest?”***

This question has been presented to me several times during my tenure as a coach and athletic director. After reading the research and drawing on my 40+ years of experience in coaching and athletic activities, I firmly believe that these are expectations that all of our students, community and fans should strive to meet as we set a proper example for everyone within the Lake Local School District.

### **1. Fans should be seen and heard in a positive manner throughout the contest.**

As a parent and community member watching a contest, you should try to blend in with the woodwork. Don't draw attention to yourself. The games are all about the *students*, not about you and your comments. If you have to say something during a contest, it should only be positive praise. Never direct negative comments towards our student-athletes, their opponents, or the officials. Pull for the *entire* team, not just one individual student!

### **2. Fans should never publically criticize their child....and never, ever criticize somebody else's child!**

Provide positive support, care, and encouragement to your student-athlete and our team. If you feel compelled to try and coach your player from the sidelines, or make some disparaging remarks, then you have crossed the line. Never ever criticize some other parent's player on your team or the opponents. Everyone wants to win, but we don't support a *“win at all cost”* mentality.

Don't belittle or demean your child with hurtful comments about his/her performance or lack of success. Players look to their parents for approval during contests, and if you look like you're having a good time, then he or she will feel the same way. But if you're scowling, or cursing, or stomping around, then your child will take that as a sign that they ought to be nervous and angry, too. So, relax – leave your game face at home – and wear a relaxed face to our games.

### **3. Every athletic contest is a learning experience for our student-athletes and our fans.**

After the game, treat the contest as a learning experience and build on the positive and minimize the negatives of your child's performance. I have seen too many relationships damaged between a parent and child because of ill-advised comments made in the heat of the moment *immediately after* a contest. Every player has a critical role in the team's success. However, not every player can be the leading scorer or play-maker. Show your child you value and accept his role in the team's success. Love and accept your child for what he is, not for what you *wished* he or she was on the athletic field!

### **4. It is okay to applaud a nice play by an opposing player.**

We're trying to teach our students to be good sports, and to respect their opponents and the officials. So if one of the opposing players makes a great play, applaud it! That's okay – yes, even sometimes the opposing team makes good plays! And you should tell your child that it's okay for their opponents to be talented as well.

### **5. Coaching is the Coach's job – - NOT yours.**

Allow the coach to be responsible for your athlete during practices, games, or team-related activities. Please do not coach your child from the stands. This presents confusion to the player and places an unfair pressure upon him to decide loyalty. Ultimately, your child is expected to do what he is being coached to do by his coach. When your child

listens to *you* instead of the coach, he or she probably will be removed from the game by the coach. There is an old, wise expression....."*One cannot serve two masters!*"

Remember that there is more than one way to approach most situations in a game. Coaches are doing their best to make the right decisions based upon situations and the ability of their players. We all make mistakes and none of us start with those intentions. Respect their decisions and factor in execution of the players before forming bold opinions of their coaching abilities.

**6. Our fans represent our school and community and other schools will judge the quality and character of our school district based on your behavior.**

The coaching staff and administration of Lake High School ask you to demonstrate Blue Streak sportsmanship as you consciously recognize how you treat the officials, the opponents' fans and players, and anyone else involved with the game. You represent our school just as much as our coaches and players. We ask you to remain aware of the types of behaviors you are modeling to our students. Understand that you are a role model for your child and others. So if you're "going nuts" on the referees, or throwing a temper tantrum, or seem emotionally unsettled in the stands, don't be surprised if your child and our student body start acting the same way. If you behave this way, I can assure you it embarrasses the fans around you, and more importantly, your child.

**7. Officials are not to be criticized or verbally abused in any way.**

Respect the position and professionalism of game officials. Officials are human beings like you and I and they are going to make an occasional mistake. Understand that the vast majority of people do not know where to draw the line when it comes to questioning an official's call.

Unfortunately, too many fans think that an official can somehow be psychologically influenced during a contest and that if they keep chirping and pointing out the mistakes of the official, they will begin to give our team the close calls. Of course, that never happens. If anything, the official will just get annoyed with our fans and then all of the close calls will go in the direction of our opponent. Thus, our student-athletes will be the ones who will suffer if you choose to criticize officials. If a questionable call is made during a game, it is the *coach's* responsibility to discuss it with them in a respectful, professional manner.

Remember that it takes everyone from our school district and its programs to be considered a success not just on the field or court, but in the stands during the game, and the parking lot after the game. It is human nature to be critical. But a school's success is based upon the commitment and sportsmanship of everyone. Any school program has a higher potential for success if everyone supports it in a positive manner. I look forward to your presence and support at each and every one of our contests this year.

Please take the time to enjoy the games and our student-athletes' commitment and dedication to their sport and our school.